

AGENDA

Quarterly Newsletter of NFPW



Meet the 2025 Communicator of Achievement hopefuls National winner to be named at conference in Golden

By Karen Stensrud
NFPW COA Director

Congratulations to all of these accomplished NFPW professionals, named their state affiliates' Communicators of Achievement in 2025.

We hope you'll join us at the NFPW Conference in Colorado in September, when we honor all of our nominees and name NFPW's national COA. Read on to learn more about each of them. They are listed alphabetically by state. Their stories will inspire you.

Elaine Hobson Miller
Alabama Media Professionals



Elaine Miller

Elaine Hobson Miller was the first woman to cover City Hall for the Birmingham Post-Herald, where she also worked as food editor. A former editor of Birmingham Home & Garden magazine and staff writer for Birmingham magazine, she has written for dozens of local, regional and national publications, including American Profile, Woman's World, Country Music, Music City News, Creative Ideas for Living and Maturity News Service. The author of two books, "Myths, Mysteries & Legends of Alabama" and "Nat King Cole: Unforgettable Musician," she writes regularly for Discover the Essence of St. Clair and LakeLife 24/7 magazines.

A member of AMP and NFPW for 33 years, Miller was president of AMP for three and a half terms and NFPW's assistant historian for two years. In 2017, AMP chose her

as COA, and NFPW named her national runner-up. She was co-director of NFPW's Communications Conference in Birmingham that year.

Kristin Netterstrom Higgins
Arkansas Press Women



Kristin Higgins

Kristin Netterstrom Higgins is the lead staff member for the Public Policy Center at the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, where she researches and educates the public on emerging policy issues. She oversees the Arkansas Ballot Issue Education Program, providing neutral voter guides and resources to help voters understand election-day issues. She holds a journalism degree and a master's degree in agricultural education and extension from the University of Arkansas, and is pursuing a Ph.D. in public policy.

In addition to her professional work, Higgins is passionate about engaging youth in science. She founded and led a Science 4-H club from 2017 to 2024, fostering scientific curiosity among local children. Before joining the Public Policy Center in 2012, she spent a decade as a journalist covering local government and crime.

Outside of work, Kristen enjoys gardening with native plants and attending her children's school and sports activities.

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President's Message: *Where did you begin?*

By Julie Campbell
NFPW President

What's your origin story? As a kid, maybe you published a neighborhood newspaper. In high school, you edited the yearbook. In college, you wrote editorials. As adults, you turned entry-level posts into lifelong careers. As I write my final column as president, I'm thinking about where I began mine: Colorado, where we will meet in September.

It's not just my career that originated there. Born in Boulder, I'm a fourth-generation Coloradoan on Mom's side, third generation on Dad's. When I was two, we moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where I grew up. But we often visited Colorado friends and relatives.

In 1981, as a graduate of Arizona State University with a B.A. in history, I knew I couldn't make a living as a summer-camp counselor any longer and needed to start a career — something to do with writing, I thought. In preparation, I took a two-month program at the famed (but now-defunct) Katharine Gibbs School in New York City, where my parents were living. It provided students with secretarial skills to get them in the door of their preferred field and then move up.

I was offered a secretarial post at Condé Nast, but the low salary and high cost of living in New York gave me pause. (A long-time reader of *Glamour* magazine in print, I wonder if I could have ended up there.) Instead, I headed for Denver, where my aunt and uncle offered a comfy home until I found a job and apartment.

The job: Secretary at a large property-management firm. The company's first word processor — a huge novelty at the time — wound up on my desk, making my cubicle a must-see stop for all. Per my Gibbs plan, I eventually transferred into the marketing department. I wrote ad copy, ordered real estate signs and learned how to estimate square footage. After a while, though, my boss gently nudged me out the door, for I was not so great at the square-footage duties.

I did temp work until I got a real publishing job, as a secretary at *Colorado Homes & Lifestyles* magazine. I immediately befriended the editors and volunteered to proofread. The then publisher was volatile and plowed through about 45 employees in my one year there. The high turnover gave me a chance to fill other roles, doing everything but sell ads. I learned how a magazine worked (and made dear friends I still have).

I moved across town to edit trade magazines for the plastics industry. (Yes, I have heard those lines from "The Graduate." Google them.) The subject matter did not thrill me, but the publisher had pioneered the use of an integrated computer system — more invaluable experience. In 1987, after three years of plastics, I left for Tucson, Arizona, and the publications office of the Arizona Historical Society.

At our Golden conference in September, I plan to welcome an editor from *Colorado Homes & Lifestyles* to the President's Roundtable. I'm eager to learn her origin story.

If I haven't heard yours yet, I'm all ears.

NFPW Code of Ethics

As a professional communicator, I recognize my responsibility to the public which has placed its trust and confidence in my work, and will endeavor to do nothing to abuse this obligation.

With truth as my ultimate goal, I will adhere to the highest standards of professional communication, never consciously misleading reader, viewer or listener; and will avoid any compromise of my objectivity or fairness.

Because I believe that professional communicators must be obligated only to the people's right to know, I affirm that freedom of the press is to be guarded as an inalienable right of the citizens of a free society.

I pledge to use this freedom wisely and to uphold the right of communicators to express unpopular opinions as well as the right to agree with the majority.

— Adopted in 1975 at the NFPW Conference in Sun Valley, Idaho

Meet the 2025 COA hopefuls . . .

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Donna Bryson

Colorado Press Women



Donna Bryson

Currently a national affairs editor for Reuters, Donna Bryson started her newspaper career with the Associated Press right after college and worked for the AP for more than 30 years in the United States, Johannesburg, New Delhi, Cairo and London. Her work in South Africa led to her award-winning first book, "It's a Black-White Thing," which explores the struggle to overcome racism after apartheid among students at the University of Free State.

Bryson's second book, "Home of the Brave: A Small Town, Its Veterans and the Community They Built Together," tells how Montrose, Colo., developed the Welcome Home Alliance for Veterans to create a "no barriers" community.

Bryson is "a gifted journalist: a reporter committed to seeking the truth; a storyteller extraordinaire who finds remarkable connections between past and present; a leader who earns the trust of sources and peers by showing a reverence for the work we do and the good it can bring," says Blake Morrison, investigative projects editor for Reuters.

Cathy Koon

Media Network Idaho



Cathy Koon

Cathy Koon joined Idaho Press Women (now Media Network Idaho) and NFPW in 1980, a move she says changed her life. She worked for newspapers until 2000, when she went into public relations. While working at the Idaho Falls Post Register, she was part of the team covering the 1988 fires in Yellowstone and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

Koon is NFPW publications director and AGENDA editor, presi-

dent of MNI and a member of the newly appointed NFPW Communications Committee. She helped plan three NFPW national conferences: 1998 in Coeur d'Alene, 2008 in Idaho Falls and 2013 in Salt Lake City.

She serves on her county's Planning and Zoning Commission and previously served as Chamber of Commerce president and economic development director. Koon is a team player who has devoted her adult life to her family, her community, her church, NFPW and MNI.

Vivian Sade

Woman's Press Club of Indiana



Vivian Sade

Although officially retired in June 2016, Viv Sade works parttime as a writer, editor and proofreader. She currently authors three corporate newsletters, is president of the Woman's Press Club of Indiana, chair of the Whitley County Democratic Party, a substitute teacher for Smith-Green Community Schools and member of the Churubusco Planning Commission.

With more than 30 years of experience in the publishing industry, both print and digital, Sade has been and continues to be recognized annually by professional journalism associations for her endeavors.

Outside of work, Sade enjoys traveling and practicing ESL — Extreme Sports Laughter — with her witty, numerous family members and hilarious circle of friends.

She and her husband Brian have a blended family of six children and 12 grandchildren.

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News articles and briefs about NFPW affiliates and members should be emailed to AGENDA Editor Cathy Koon
cathykoon1952@gmail.com.
Photos are always welcome.
Be sure to include your name, affiliate and length of membership.

Meet the 2025 COA hopefuls . . .

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Amanda Silverman Kosior

North Dakota Professional Communicators



Amanda Kosior

Amanda Silverman Kosior is a board member and marketing director at JLG Architects, a nine-office, multi-studio firm of more than 220 employee-owners. She has more than 25 years' experience in media/public relations, community engagement, internal/human resource communications, social media strategy, advertising, branding and multi-media content creation.

She leads the firm's award-winning graphic designers, environmental branders, writers, social media planners, photographers/videographers and studio marketing coordinators. She works to strengthen internal and external communications that enhance firm culture, client relations and community integration.

Beyond JLG, Kosior founded the NorthDakotaNice website and blog, which catalyzed weekly network appearances on the ND Today show. When she's not blogging or spending time with her two sons, she mentors marketing/communication students at the University of North Dakota. Kosior graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Science degree in communications and a minor in English from Boston University.

Léonie Rosenstiel

New Mexico Press Women



Léonie Rosenstiel

Léonie Rosenstiel survived childhood in an abusive family. Starting out as an award-winning classical musician, she graduated from Barnard College, then from the Ph.D. program at Columbia University's Graduate Faculties. She also earned degrees in counselling ministry (The New Seminary), Oriental medicine (Tri-State College) and public health (Walden University).

Rosenstiel received grants from the Rockefeller Foundation and the American Council of Learned Societies and produced a TV show for six years. Rosenstiel wrote, translated, edited and contributed chapters to more than a dozen books. She has written numerous articles and short stories, many of which won awards.

She was appointed to the NMPW Board in 2019 as its PR chair. In 2022 and 2024, she was unanimously elected vice president. She has also served as its Zia Award chair and editor of its newsletter, The Broadsheet. Her book "Protecting Mama" (2021) won 30 literary awards. "Legal Protection" (2024) has won three.

Diane Lund-Muzikant

Oregon Press Women



Diane Lund-Muzikant

When health care industry changes profoundly affected Oregon's stakeholders, Oregon Press Women's Lund-Muzikant realized players had no common communication source. The independent health policy journalist formed a non-profit to hold public discussions about the broken system. She reported developments in Oregon Health News, a print publication she created and edited. OHN covered legislative hearings and interviewed health officials and consumer advocates.

Digging into public records, Lund-Muzikant reported salaries of medical and insurance leaders, insurance company profits and practices. Her reporting angered those she exposed, but she was relentless in OHN and in her subsequent electronic newsletter, The Lund Report. Using her investigative skills to inform the public was her passion from 1990 until her retirement in 2024.

U.S. Senator Jeff Merkeley said, "Diane set the standard for honest dogged reporting, and The Lund Report has had a massive impact on health care in Oregon."

Terry Haycock, Virginia

Virginia Professional Communicators

Terry Haycock makes music with words. Whether it's writing more than 30 member profiles for Virginia Professional Communicators, editing the Illinois Woman's Press

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Meet the 2025 COA hopefuls . . .

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Terry Haycock

Association newsletter, tutoring college students of many nationalities in English and business writing, or journaling, the lifelong pianist channels her musical talents into communications benefiting numerous organizations and nonprofits.

Haycock managed communications for the Three Arts Club of Chicago, American Fishing

Tackle Manufacturing Association and National Safety Council. Twenty years after leaving college, she earned a bachelor's degree in English from Northern Illinois University and became a first-time mother at 47. She served as parish administrator for two Illinois Episcopal parishes, election judge and arts supporter.

Haycock retired to Virginia, joined VPC, served as first vice president of membership and secretary and is now treasurer. She is membership vice president and the current president-elect of the Richmond Alumnae Chapter of Sigma Alpha Iota, an international music fraternity.

NFPW 2026 contest deadlines . . . *It's not too early to prepare*

Professional Contest deadlines (noon in entrant's time zone)

Contest Opens - Oct. 15, 2025
Early Deadline - Jan. 21, 2026
Book Deadline - Feb. 4, 2026
Book Judging begins -- Feb. 6, 2026
Final Deadline - Feb. 18, 2026
Professional Judging Opens - Feb. 20, 2026
Affiliate Judging Deadline - Monday, March 16, 2026
NFPW Membership Deadline - March 25, 2026
National Professional Judging Opens - Friday, March 27, 2026
National Professional Judging Closes - April 22, 2026

High School Contest deadlines (noon in entrant's time zone)

Contest Opens - Oct. 15, 2025
Entry Deadline - Feb. 18, 2026
High school judging opens - Feb. 19, 2026
Affiliate/At-large Judging Deadline - Monday, March 16, 2026
National High School Judging Opens - March 17, 2026
National High School Judging Closes - April 10, 2026
High School Best of the Best Judging Begins - April 11, 2026



Golden, here we come

Registration open

Registration now for the 2025 NFPW Communications Conference held Sept. 11–13 in Golden, Colorado.

Hosted by Colorado Press Women (CPW), the 2025 conference offers educational sessions, networking opportunities and tours for journalists, public relations professionals, educators and students aiming to expand their skills and connections.

The program includes 15 thought-provoking educational sessions designed to inform, inspire and empower communicators. Led by award-winning speakers, these sessions will cover science storytelling, crisis communications, media ethics, media literacy, censorship, nonprofit news models, responsible use of AI and other timely topics. In addition, attendees can explore Colorado's rich history, vibrant culture and stunning natural beauty through curated tours and unforgettable local experiences.

The 2025 conference offers several levels of registra-

tion designed to fit any budget and bandwidth:

- ◆ Register for the full conference to enjoy two breakfasts, two lunches, the Communicator of Achievement banquet the evening of Friday, Sept. 12, and the Professional Contest Awards banquet the evening of Saturday, Sept. 13.
- ◆ Alternatively, you can register to attend one day of the conference, which includes one breakfast and one lunch.
- ◆ If you are a high school or college student, you are eligible for a discounted rate at all levels of registration.

Register for the conference before Friday, Aug. 15, and book your lodging before Wednesday, Aug. 20, to enjoy early-bird discounts on both.



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Golden . . .

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To register for the conference or book your room, go to [2025 Conference](#).

Boost Your Career with Expert Advice

Free one-on-one consultations with veteran communications professionals can be booked during the conference. Just starting your career, or seeking new opportunities in communications? Consider a session with one of the consultants, who include:

- ◆ Rebecca Brooks, president, Brooks Group Public Relations
- ◆ Sylvia Lambe, CEO, Lambe Public Relations
- ◆ Donna Bryson, U.S. National Affairs editor and reporter, Reuters
- ◆ Helen H. Richardson, staff photographer, Denver Post

Sessions are available by appointment only, which should be made prior to the start of the conference. To schedule a time, [email Bryson](mailto:donna@innoabrd.com) (donna@innoabrd.com).

Discover Colorado with local tours

CPW has curated pre- and post-conference tours of Golden, Denver and nearby Rocky Mountain National Park. Space is limited, so secure your spot by Tuesday, July 15.

Discover Denver Tuesday, Sept. 9

\$130.00

Dive into Denver's art and history with visits to the History Colorado Center, the Denver Art Museum and a reception at CPW member Donna Bryson's art-filled home.

Giddy Up to Golden Wednesday, Sept. 10

\$105.00

Explore Lookout Mountain, the Buffalo Bill Museum, Red Rocks Amphitheatre, the Mines Museum of Earth Science, the Golden History Museum and Park, and Golden's historic downtown.

Play in Rocky Mountain National Park Sunday, Sept. 14

\$235.00

Take in the rugged beauty of Rocky Mountain National Park — all from the comfort of a luxury



One of many gentle walking trails in Rocky Mountain National Park.
Photo by Gay Porter DeNileon

Strategic snapshot: Report from the NFPW board

By Julie Campbell, NFPW President
Karen Rowley, NFPW Immediate Past President

This year marks the halfway point of our 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, and the Board of Directors took advantage of its April 2025 retreat (see Item E under “Leadership Strategies”) to see where we stand in implementing the strategies we laid out to help us achieve the plan’s overall goals.

At our 2022 conference in Fargo, North Dakota, the then elected and appointed Board of Directors worked with a local company, Reach Partners, to create a five-year roadmap for NFPW. The result was the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan. You can read [the complete plan here](#).

With that in mind, we thought you would like to see where we stand. So, here’s a June 2025 snapshot of progress we’ve made, which will continue to provide guidance for the 2025-2027 board.

Advocacy Goal: Develop, foster and champion First Amendment advocacy program with ethical standards for communicators.

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

- A. Make FAN membership automatic.
 - a. Start with appointed and elected board
 - b. Have an opt-out option
 - c. Make an announcement in Agenda and e-letter
- B. FAN more than free press – share all aspects of the First Amendment fight.
 - a. Contact orgs like Freedom Forum/Poynter Institute to build relationships and potentially partner.
- C. Research software for members to easily see who their legislators are.
 - a. To make it easy for our members to send messages re: FAN to legislators
 - b. Make participation easy
- D. Include FAN news in every Agenda newsletter.
 - a. Solicit members/affiliates to share FAN news from their state.
- E. Strategies to broaden awareness and use of the NFPW ethics code.
 - a. Add Ethics code to membership form.

- b. Add to notepads as giveaways at conference.

June 2025 Status:

B. We’ve issued several statements and/or signed other organizations’ statements regarding national First Amendment situations. We are now on the radar of organizations who ask us to attach our names to statements.

D. We publish First Amendment content often in AGENDA and every month in the E-Letter. For example, entire issues of AGENDA (Winter 2024 and Winter 2025) were devoted to the First Amendment, and the Fall 2023 AGENDA had First Amendment content related to our statements. The E-Letter now includes Marsha Shuler’s email address for members to contact her with FOI news.

E. We will have notepads printed with our Ethics Code for members at the 2025 conference. In a related topic, in 2024 the board adopted a Code of Conduct for the NFPW conference and all NFPW activities.

Affiliates Goal: Clearly define the relationship between NFPW and Affiliates.

AFFILIATE STRATEGIES

- A. Encourage affiliate leadership roles.
 - a. Identify needs and provide training.
- B. Encourage NFPW leadership roles..
- C. Encourage contest participation.
 - a. Increase connection with affiliates .
 - b. Include questions on the survey
- D. Work with high schools and colleges.
- E. Conduct survey of affiliates.
 - a. Challenges, successes and training
- F. Archive Agendas on the website.
- G. Conduct analysis to establish most engaged, most members, most COAs, most elected Board members, etc.

June 2025 Status:

C. We encourage participation in the contest through a variety of avenues and have seen an increase in numbers. In 2025, the number of entries submitted was 1,963, compared to 1,854 in 2024 and 1,771 in 2023. In 2025, the number of entrants (submitters) was 440, compared to 241 in 2024.

D. The director of the national high school contest works with schools around the country.

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Strategic snapshot: Report . . .

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F. We have archived all issues of AGENDA from 2016 to the present in the "Members Only" section of the NFPW website.

G. While working on the Strategic Plan in 2022, we came up with lists of "COA Nominees by Affiliate," "Elected Board by Affiliates" and "COA Nominees by Affiliate 2018-2022, compared to Elected Officers by Affiliate 2016-2022." They are available in the Members Only area of the website.

Brand Goal: Clarify and sharpen NFPW's brand within today's communications landscape.

BRAND STRATEGIES

- A. Drop the full name. Use the acronym only.
- B. Survey members including first timers.
- C. Effectively communicate the new mission and vision.
- D. Include logo everywhere.
 - a. Increase logo wear purchases
 - b. Push item sales for holidays and leading up to conference
- E. Create a brand guide.
- F. Develop Giving Tuesday communication strategy.
- G. Strongly encourage affiliates to use the logo.

July 2025 Status:

A. "NFPW" is in frequent use by the organization, by board members, by members.

B. We surveyed the entire membership about NFPW's communications as part of a communications audit. The final report from the audit, by Alisha Prather and Melinda Deslatte, was delivered to the board in December 2024 and shared with members in the Spring 2025 AGENDA and the April 2025 E-Letter. Since then, the board has created the Communications Committee to study the results of the audit and develop strategies to implement its recommendations.

C. The mission and vision are mentioned in conference materials and in NFPW publications such as the E-Letter.

D. The 2023 conference saw the return of logo items. We will offer logo items for sale ahead of the 2025 conference and provide logo swag to conference attendees.

E. A brand guide may be a consideration of the Communications Committee.

Governance Goal: Develop and communicate clear and consistent operations, policies and procedures in NFPW Operations, Finance and Administration.

GOVERNANCE STRATEGIES

- A. Conduct board self-evaluation.
- B. Educate members on these goals.

- C. Virtual Workshops
- D. Partnerships with other orgs
- E. Audit, review and revise organizational policies and procedures.
 - a. Develop Board Manual.
 - b. Increase web pages related to governance.
- F. Clarify committee roles and responsibilities.
- G. Develop committees and schedules.

June 2025 Status:

B. The president's column in the Fall 2023 AGENDA explained how the board decided to issue the First Amendment statements. The president's column in the February 2024 E-Letter described the functions of the NFPW staff.

E. The current president is adding to the existing conference manual.

G. Per the bylaws, the vice president chairs the Membership Committee, and the treasurer chairs the Finance Committee. The latter committee met in early 2025. The Communications Committee, formed in early 2025, will study the results and recommendations of the fall 2024 communications audit. (See also "Brand Strategies.") The board also created a History Committee, which met in fall 2024. Some useful history-related documents were given to NFPW. The board disbanded the committee in January 2025 with thanks to its members when it realized some ambitious recommendations on the best ways to preserve NFPW's history exceeded current resources and goals.

Leadership Goal: Build and develop leadership that steers and keeps the organization evolving and accountable.

LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

- A. Develop new board member onboarding/training.
- B. Training for Affiliates.
- C. Engage volunteers outside of the core board.
 - a. Identify volunteer opportunities at the conference.and ask members to sign up
- D. Conduct annual board self-review/survey.
- E. Add Board Retreat
 - a. Possible Fall meeting for all elected and appointed
- F. List committees and members on the website.
- G. Develop a social campaign for conference.
- H. Develop social campaign around leadership positions and those that fill them .

June 2025 status:

B. The board plans to hold virtual training sessions for affiliates.

C. The Communications Committee and Finance Committee contain members who serve on neither the elected

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Strategic snapshot: Report . . .

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nor the appointed board.

E. The elected board and presidential advisors met in Greenville, South Carolina, in April 2025.

G. Lisa Volz of Association Leadership Partners and Colorado Press Women are working on the social campaign for the 2025 conference.

Membership Goal: Maximize membership.

MEMBERSHIP STRATEGIES

- A. Collect membership professions.
- B. Seek list of members with .edu email addresses and encourage them to promote the collegiate con-

test to students on their campus.

C. Gain more collegiate entries in hopes of capturing more interest in professional membership once the students graduate.

D. Strengthen path from high school and college to full membership participation.

June 2025 status:

A. Our lists contain some but not all professions.

C. Colorado Press Women, which is hosting the 2025 conference, is making a special effort to promote the conference to college students.

Candidates file for election; VP slot still empty

NFPW is still looking for candidates to run for election to the board of directors as vice president.

According to a June 13 email from the Elections Committee, "Since no candidate for vice president emerged as of (the) deadline to present the slate to members, the NFPW board has decided to issue a call for further nominations as permitted by our Bylaws."

The committee announced the following list of members who answered the call to serve as NFPW leaders during 2025-2027. Please note the slate has since changed from two candidates for secretary to one.

- President: Debbie Miller, Arkansas
- Vice President: open
- Secretary: Kristin Netterstrom Higgins, Arkansas
- Treasurer: Karen Stensrud, North Dakota

On Sept. 11, the candidates will be introduced during

the General Membership meeting, and the election will follow.

Between now and Aug. 12, nominations by petition will be accepted for the vice president position. A member may be nominated through a petition signed by 10 active NFPW members in good standing. The Elections Committee will determine whether the nominated candidate is willing to stand for election and is a member in good standing.

Submit nominations to NFPW's administrative manager, Lisa Volz (lisa@nfpw.org).

In addition, nominations will be taken from the floor during the membership meeting when the slate of candidates is presented.

The new officers will be installed by NFPW President Julie Campbell on Saturday, Sept. 13.

Deadline for AGENDA extended for October issue

Submit stories and/or photos by Sept. 18, 2025
(For publication October 2025)

Send submissions to cathykoon1952@gmail.com

Arkansas wins top award in high school contest

By Teri Ehresman
NFPW High School Contest Director

Students at Bryant High School in Bryant, Arkansas, won top honors in the 2025 NFPW's annual high school communications contest.

The school's Hornet Media Staff's Hornet News Now Episode 3, which aired Nov. 20, 2024, has been named the Julie Hoffman Memorial Best of the Best award winner, the top award given in the national high school communications contest.

The winners were announced during a Zoom awards ceremony in mid-May, and the winners have been invited to be further honored at a luncheon as part of the NFPW conference in September in Colorado. The contest is sponsored by the NFPW Education Fund, with Teri Ehresman as national high school contest director.

Hornet News Now is one of two news shows produced by the Hornet Media students at Bryant High School. The show provides a variety of storytelling opportunities for students by including news packages, features, sports updates and weather reports just like you would see in a local television market. The show is produced by 20 students in the advanced television production program. This is the fourth season of HNN since the inception of the Hornet Media program during the 2021-2022 school year.

Adviser for the program, Michael Westbrook, said, "The Hornet Media students understand that to contribute to this program they have a responsibility to tell the stories of others on our campus. That one simple fact has always been our priority and they have done a phenomenal job this year to achieve that goal. I'm proud of the work ethic, dedication to excellence and great attitudes this group of students came to school with every day to produce a newscast worthy of recognition on a national level."

Mady Calhoun, Bryant High School junior and one of the program producers, says, "We are honored to be recognized as the Best of the Best from the National Federation of Press Women. Our group has worked hard this year to be accurate in our storytelling and technical as-

"Our group has worked hard this year to be accurate in our storytelling and technical aspects of producing shows."

*— Mady Calhoun
Student and
program producer*



Bryant High School's Hornet Media staff. Photo courtesy of Bryant High School.

pects of producing shows. On behalf of our Hornet Media staff, thank you for this recognition."

The program has also been recognized within Arkansas, where Hornet Media students won three of the prestigious Arkansas Scholastic Press Association Of the Year entries. Calhoun was named Producer of the Year, Senior Chelsea Jensen won Journalist of the Year and Senior Riley Forte earned On-Air Talent of the Year.

The entry competed against nearly 2,000 student entries in this national contest sponsored by the NFPW Education Fund. Student entries first competed in a state communication contest. First-place winners were selected to advance to the national round of competition. In states where a contest was not offered, NFPW hosted an at-large contest with the first-place winners also advancing to the national competition. The first-place entries all 23 categories in the contest then were judged by new judges who

selected the Bryant High School entry as the "Best of the Best" entry.

This is the second time an Arkansas school has won the Best of the Best award. In 2022, Claire Hudnell, Lakeside High School, Hot Springs, Arkansas, won the award for a video feature story she wrote and produced, "Vision Interrupted," about a student with vision issues.

National first-place entries receive a \$100 prize, and the Best of the Best award prize is \$500.

Nebraska Press Women busy planning conferences

By Lori Potter
Nebraska Press Women

Nebraska Press Women's fall conference will be Oct. 10-11, 2025, at the new Hotel Garber in Red Cloud. Lincoln members are planning the 2026 spring conference April 24-25, during which the affiliate will celebrate its 80th anniversary.

Prior to the Friday night supper and board meeting at its spring conference in April, members toured Omaha's Joslyn Museum and the nearby office of the Flatwater A special guest was NFPW Assistant Historian Mary Pat Finn-Hoag of Norfolk.

Twenty-five student winners in the NPW High School Communications Contest attended the April 12 awards lunch. The awards were presented by contest director Sherry Thompson of Omaha and contest committee member Barb Batie of Lexington.

The fall conference in October will be in Red Cloud, author Willa Cather's childhood hometown, and the first Nebraska place my great-great grandpa and three of his brothers came to in the years following the Civil War.

In early April, a new boutique hotel was opened — Hotel Garber — in what once had been the Potter-Wright Building, a department store. It had stood empty at least since 1961, when a fire destroyed the third floor. So that will be our conference site.

Glennis Nagel of Kearney and Potter drove to Red Cloud in June to work out some of the details.



Mary Jane Skala leads NPW members from Omaha's Joslyn Museum to the office of Flatwater Free Press during the pre-tour at the 2025 spring conference. Photo by Lori Potter



The NPW logo was projected on a screen to start the Saturday lunch program for the state high school contest awards, with contest director Sherry Thompson and helper Barb Batie in silhouette. Photo by Lori Potter



NFPW Education Fund
wants to be your charity
of choice



Remember us

Donating is a great way to honor loved ones and support high school journalists and communicators.



<https://www.nfpw.org/education-fund>

NFPW Education Fund, a 501(c)(3) organization
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Stress can't derail new life adventure

By Ruth E. Thaler-Carter
Member in Transit

I started 2025 by deciding it was time for a (possibly last) big adventure: moving somewhere closer to family, with about as much space as my St. Louis condo but less expensive, with better management services.



Ruth Thaler-Carter

One of my brothers has lived near Albuquerque, New Mexico, for almost 50 years. His daughter and son are near them with their families, we have a cousin and her family in the same town, and a high school classmates of mine nearby. When I asked how he would feel about my moving there, he was downright enthusiastic.

My nephew sent me a link about a condo community where a cousin's son lived and my brother had several friends, one of whom told him a unit was about to go on the market. I called the realty company, flew out in January to see it and became the owner in February!

I've moved a lot, and it was always an adventure. This one involved unexpected stress.

A pinched nerve or sciatica limited the packing I could do. I ended up in the hospital with a perforated ulcer, probably caused by taking too many NSAIDs for that condition. A couple episodes of dehydration were scary. I've had to lean on family far more than expected.

However, the good things outweigh the unexpected stress.

Several friends and neighbors helped with packing, a friend of my youngest brother came to St. Louis and then to Albuquerque to help, and a lifelong friend came to the new place to give a hand with decorating.

I was worried that the travel and disruption would affect my cat, but she's adapted as if it was nothing.

The sciatica has completely cleared up. I'm adjusting to the high altitude and dry climate.

My new place is like a little cottage, rather than a unit in a several-story building, and I'm getting used to its creaks and groans. The neighborhood isn't the walkable everything-you-need-within-two-blocks urban environ-

ment I've been in for many years, but I'm still driving, and restaurants and shops are nearby. It's a little farther from my family than I planned, but not by much.

My neighbors are friendly and welcoming; I've been invited to help with the community magazine; my street holds a monthly potluck and management hosts social events for all on holidays; there's a pool, walking trail, and onsite manager.

NFPW is playing a role in making this adventure work — there's a New Mexico chapter! I was part of the Missouri Professional Communicators (MPC) affiliate's "Terrific Trio" who planned the 2024 NFPW conference, spoke at that event, organized a couple of MPC programs and have won six awards in the 2024 MPC Communications Contest. I'm planning to be as active here as I was in St. Louis.

It was hard to leave St. Louis friends, neighbors and colleagues, but we're staying connected through email and phone calls. As I often joke, once you're in my network, you never escape!

Family, friends and colleagues say they admire my building a new life in a new place at 72. I don't know where that strength comes from, but I'm grateful for whatever is in me that makes this new adventure possible.



The view from Ruth's new condo and the Vitex flower in bloom outside her front door.

Goodland still loves covering the Colorado Legislature

By Ann Lockhart
Colorado Press Women

How has reporter Marianne Goodland survived covering the Colorado Legislature for 27 years?

"I have a life outside the legislature...a husband and a daughter and I play the harp. It keeps me grounded," she says. She has even played the harp on the final day on the (Colorado) House floor for close to 10 years.

Regarded as the dean of the State Capitol press corps, she has been a political reporter since 1998. She is chief legislative reporter for Colorado Politics (a weekly print and 24/7 online news outlet), the Denver Gazette and the Colorado Springs Gazette, which are owned by billionaire businessman Philip Anschutz.

She covers the Colorado General Assembly, state agencies, public policy and elections.

"I love what I do," she admitted to Colorado Press Women at the group's annual meeting April 19 in Denver. The legislature and covering water are her two areas of expertise; water is a major interest of rural Colorado areas often plagued with drought. She works to cover all sides of issues.

From January to early April, her hours are fairly normal as legislators introduce five bills apiece, although some introduce many more bills. This year, legislators introduced 650 bills.

"It's a frenetic pace," she said. "Committee hearings are kind of a joke. There's not enough time." In the next January legislative session, legislators try to correct mistakes in bills.

After April 1, she often has a 60-hour work week including weekends as the legislators struggle to hold hearings, debate and vote on bills before the session ends May 7. Among the issues she covered this year were gun control, tow truck and funeral home regulation, geother-

mal and nuclear energy, and the Open Records Act. She's also covered lawmakers who don't live in the district they represent (nine at one point.).

Another current issue involves a 1923 Interstate Compact between Colorado and Nebraska which allows Nebraska to build the Perkins Canal in northeast Colorado near Julesburg and Ovid to channel more water from the South Platte River to the neighboring state. It would dry up six plots of Colorado farm land.

"The legislature has one job — to pass a budget," she said. Funding for Medicaid, education and corrections take 70 percent of the state's budget. This year Colorado is about to fall off a fiscal cliff with a \$1.2 billion budget shortfall, she said.

During the off season, Goodland often travels around the state. She has developed a network of sources who often come to her with story ideas. After the November election, she starts getting excited about the new legislative session starting in January.

Coming from a Wisconsin family involved in politics, she began her career doing communications and media relations for the University of Denver. She then worked for the Silver and Gold Record newspaper that covered faculty and staff at the University of Colorado, until a former CU president cut the newspaper's funding.

A job with The Colorado Statesman followed. She then had a legislative reporting service covering stories for seven northeast Colorado newspapers, often involving water. She worked for the Colorado Independent for a few years where, she noted, she had great editors. But in 2017, "they cut me loose," she said. She was unemployed for 25 minutes until she got a job offer from Colorado Politics. She's also a semi-regular on PBS 12 shows "Colorado Inside Out" and "Devil's Advocate" with Jon Caldara.

Goodland was named "Keeper of the Fame" in 2023, a top award from the regional Society of Professional Journalists recognizing lifetime achievement and for mentoring young journalists. She has been recognized more than 50 times with awards from the Colorado Press Association and SPJ, including for her weekly humor column on the legislature called "Capitol M." She is currently president of the Denver Press Club board of directors.



Marianne Goodland

Affiliate and Member News . . .

Missouri Professional Communicators

By Ruth E. Thaler-Carter

"This is American history."

That reference to Black history was a key message at the February 2025 meeting of Missouri Professional Communicators (MPC), the Missouri affiliate of NFPW, when journalists Linda Lockhart and Sharon Stevens helped MPC recognize Black History Month by discussing the history of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) and NABJ-St. Louis. The NABJ is celebrating 50 years of service and support to journalists of color, and the St. Louis chapter's 50th anniversary is next year.

Lockhart recalled reading about a local high school student — Gerald Boyd — winning a University of Missouri-Columbia School of Journalism scholarship from the Post-Dispatch daily newspaper and her mother saying Lockhart would receive it the following year — which she did. That was the beginning of her career as a reporter and copyeditor in St. Louis, Milwaukee, St. Paul and back in St. Louis, and her role as co-founder of NABJ-STL and service on the national board.

Stevens had the familiar experience among colleagues of being one of very few people of color in her journalism school program. "That felt lonely," she said. Having been writing and doing journalism since childhood, she came to St. Louis after working in Chicago and New York City.



Sharon Stevens, Ruth Thaler-Carter, Linda Lockhart at the February 2025 Missouri Professional Communicators (MPC) program.

Editor's note: Linda Lockhart died March 29 after fighting breast cancer for several years. She joined MPC as a result of this program, entered the MPC Communication Contest and received an award.

Illinois Woman's Press Association

Tracy Ahrens' poetry book, "The blue line," has received a nomination seal from The Eric Hoffer Book Awards which honors the memory of the



Tracy Ahrens

American philosopher Eric Hoffer by highlighting salient writing, as well as the independent spirit of small publishers. Since its inception, the Hoffer has become one of the largest international book awards for small, academic and inde-



pendent presses.

Its website says, "Nearly 200 judges strive to unearth good writing in 25 categories and the various honors and medals associated with The Eric Hoffer Book Award. In general, we focus on the very best writing in each category. Many good books will just miss honors, and unfortunately, we cannot bestow honors on every book."

"The blue line" is available for \$10 through Bottlecap press at <https://bottlecap.press/products/blueline>

Illinois Woman's Press Association

Join us as we congratulate NFPW/Illinois Woman's Press Association member Michele Weldon. She recently discussed her new



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Affiliate and Member News . . .

book, "The Time We Have: Essays on Pandemic" on CBS News Living. <https://lnkd.in/dpvpAgVe>



Virginia Professional Communicators

The spring conference of Virginia Professional Communicators started with a bang — a literal boom.

What would a visit to the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown be without an artillery demonstration? As the group gathered for the conference, the first order of business was heading outside to learn how cannons were fired. VPC members, working with living history interpreters, prepared the cannon for firing, which included loading the gunpowder. Long-time member Martha Steger served as the captain and gave the "Fire" command.

Back inside, curators provided brief museum tours before everyone gathered to hear from VPC's 2025 Newsmaker of the Year, Cheryl Wilson, executive director of VA250.

We can't communicate what we don't know, and that's where our members come in.

Share news about your affiliates and members for inclusion in the monthly E-Letter and in **AGENDA**, the official quarterly newsletter of NFPW.

Send items for the E-Letter to president@nfpw.org. The deadline is the 15th of the month preceding publication.

Send items for **AGENDA** to cathykoon1952@gmail.com.



She said America's founding was a revolution of ideas at a time of great change and uncertainty, and much of what made America happen happened in Virginia. That thought led to the campaign, "America. Made in Virginia."

Virginia lays claim to the first permanent English settlement.

"There is no America without Virginia," Wilson said.

The semi quincentennial movement "inspires a renewed commitment to the ideals on which the nation was founded," Wilson said. The movement is about telling the stories behind the stories and the importance of families sharing their stories.

"Our stories bring us together,"

Wilson said. "What is true for a family is true for a community, is true for a nation." More information about the semi quincentennial is available at VA250.org.

Following Wilson's presentation, VPC honored its Communicator of Achievement, the Agnes Cooke Scholarship winner and winners of the state communications contest.

"We were really pleased with the turnout, and the energy among members in attendance was terrific," said VPC Co-president Tracy Perkins, who is the the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation.

The conference was in partnership with the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation.

Submitting obituaries

Notify NFPW Historian Amy Geiszler-Jones (algj64@sbcglobal.net) of the deaths of affiliate/NFPW members so NFPW may recognize those individuals in AGENDA and the E-Letter, and at the annual memorial service during the national conference.

Barbara Gigione, NFPW stalwart for 65 years

I am celebrating my 65th year as a member of Colorado Press Women and NFPW. Who knew in 1960, when I first met a group of women already active in local Colorado newspapers and radio, that these would be my friends and support group throughout my career. That monthly luncheon was at the Denver Press Club, but we had members from throughout the state and a three-day conference in the spring.

I was hired as a reporter-photographer at the Boulder Daily Camera, starting three days after graduating from the University of Colorado in 1957 (with the understanding that I could substitute for the women's editor and also proof-read as needed).

About 10 years later, then married with two small children, I was freelancing from home and had my



first opportunity to attend a national NFPW conference in Billings, Montana. I guess you could say I was hooked, because in addition to CPW positions, I served through the years as national contest chair (entries arrived in boxes sent to my house west of Boulder), on the Education Fund Committee and as NFPW regional chair and treasurer.



Whenever possible, I have attended NFPW conferences throughout the country — and once in Mexico City — and have served on committees for two national conferences in Colorado. Now I am looking forward to greeting longtime friends and many younger, new members at the September national conference, right here at home.

In Remembrance...

Arizona Press Women

Joan Kay Westlake, 75, died March 29, 2025. She was an accomplished writer, editor, mentor and skilled communicator who believed in truth, fairness and the beauty of the written word.



During her career, she worked as a writer and editor at several Phoenix-based magazines and newspapers, and as an executive at a top-ranked public relations agency. She later worked in public relations and marketing positions at Paradise Valley Community College, Glendale Com-

munity College, Phoenix College and Mesa College.

During her tenure as a member of Arizona Press Women, she served the affiliate as president and membership director. She also was an APW Communicator of Achievement.

Missouri Professional Communicators

Sue Mathias, 99, died Feb. 9, 2025, one month shy of her 100th birthday. She took to the skies for most of her career, starting as an actress in a Pan-Am Airways film and becoming the first



woman in Missouri to earn a commercial helicopter license.

When she joined KMOX, she was the station's only female on-air personality, handling the station's traffic watch as "Sue in 'Copter Two" and eventually covering local, national and world events, including interviews with Mother Teresa, five U.S. presidents, royalty and astronauts. When her hot-air balloon in the Great Forest Park Balloon Race set down in the Mississippi River, she kept reporting on-air. After retiring from radio reporting at age 65, she wrote for local newspapers and mag-

(Continued on page 18)

In Remembrance . . .

(Continued from page 17)

azines and started a handwriting analysis business.

Missouri Professional Communicators

St. Louis Journalist Linda Lockhart, 72, died May 4, 2025, from complications of cancer.

In February she shared the spotlight in a program for MPC discussing establishment of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) nationally and in the St. Louis region almost 50 years ago.

Lockhart joined MPC early this year when she submitted a personal essay in the 2025 state Communica-



tions Contest. It earned first place and has been judged among winners in the national contest.

In her last months, she contributed background for her MPC program biography, edited her obituary and wrote a letter to a future grandchild. She received her early education in Lutheran schools and was one of the first four Black students at Lutheran South High School.

She graduated from the University of Missouri School of Journalism on a scholarship from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, later a main source of her 45-year journalism career as a police and education reporter.

The scholarship came with entry-level jobs in the newsroom each

summer plus an offer for a permanent job upon graduation, she recalled in her winning contest entry, "Race and St. Louis: A reflection on events that shaped my life."

She also edited newspapers in Wisconsin and Minnesota, served as interim managing editor at the St. Louis American and worked for the digital St. Louis Beacon. She prioritized mentoring of budding high school and college journalists.

She was a member of the first board of the St. Louis Chapter of the NABJ, which recognized her as a "Living Legend" in 2014. She was inducted into the St. Louis Media History Foundation Hall of Fame in the print category in 2024.

Book conference room early and save

Denver Marriott West, site for the 2025 NFPW national conference is just off I-70, 29 minutes from Denver International Airport and five minutes from downtown Golden, Colorado.

The conference, hosted by Colorado Press Women, is set for Sept. 11-13.

Nestled in the foothills west of Denver, the hotel's sophisticated Colorado vibe reflects the stunning beauty of its surroundings through warm and comfortable spaces that invite visitors to:

- Network with old and new friends at the Copper Creek Bar and Restaurant.
- Enjoy cool autumn evenings poolside by the outdoor fire.
- Unwind in a hotel room featur-



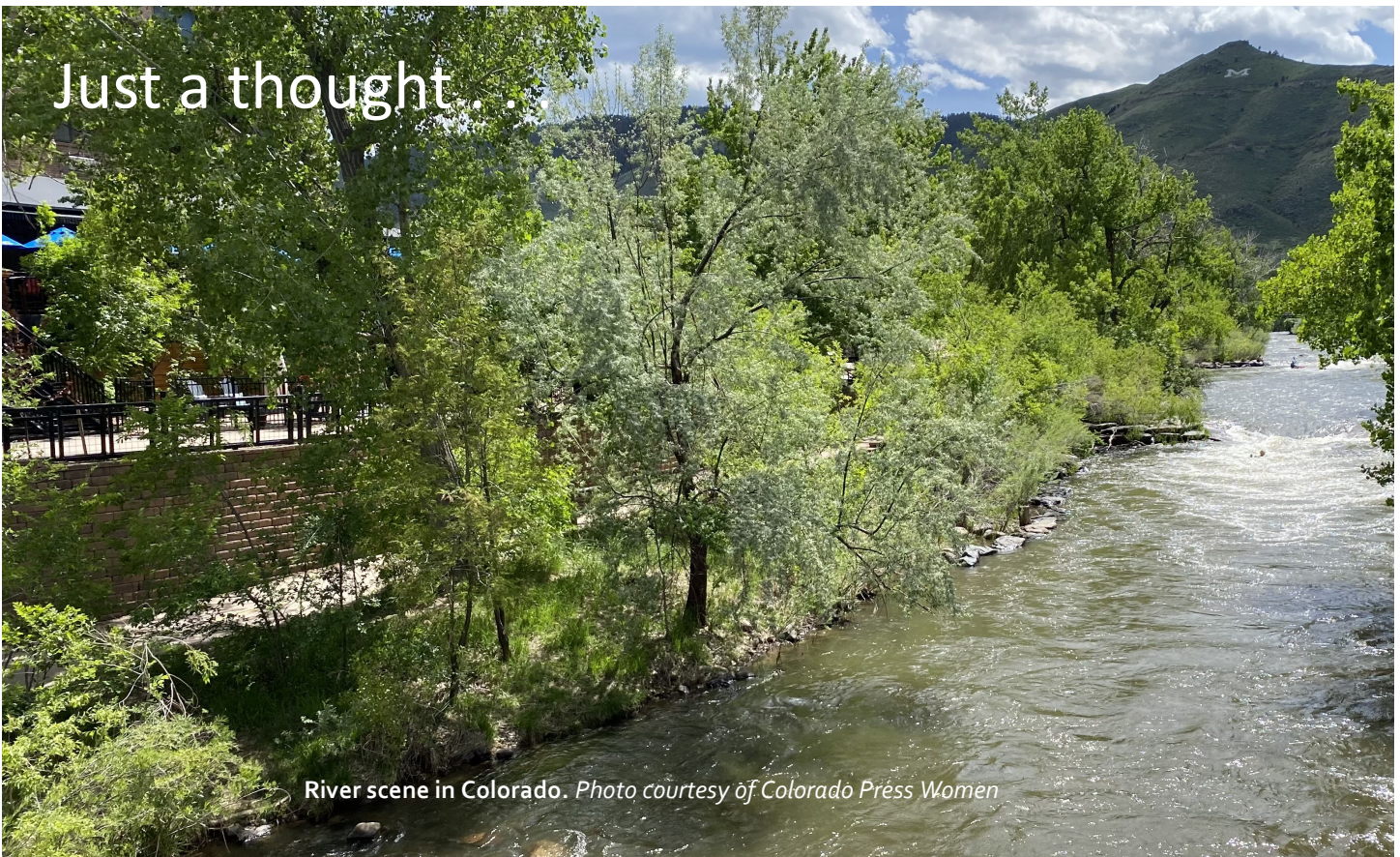
ing pillowtop bedding and inspiring views of Colorado's rolling foothills.

[Reserve your lodging at the Denver Marriott West now](#) to secure the

discounted room rate.

The nightly rate for NFPW member is \$169. The last day to book at that rate is Wednesday, Aug. 20.

Just a thought . . .



River scene in Colorado. Photo courtesy of Colorado Press Women

By Cathy Koon
AGENDA Editor

Plan A: Write a column about books from my high school recommended reading list I didn't read.

Why? I recently found a copy of "The Great Gatsby" in the small neighborhood library box installed next door. I had never read it and decided it was about time.

A few pages in, after adjusting to the literary style of Fitzgerald, I couldn't put it down. I was disappointed in the ending. It seemed rushed, like even Fitzgerald was not quite sure why it ended that way.

So how could I connect that to an audience of professional communicators who have probably read many of those recommended tomes.

I have always been a voracious reader. The backs of cereal boxes were devoured along with their con-

tents at breakfast. Weekly Readers, magazines, encyclopedias and, of course, books from the city library, my favorite place to be on rainy or snowy day.

What strikes me most clearly is the interconnectedness of all literature, from "See Dick run. Run, Dick, run," to "Live long and prosper."

So much of our daily speech, at least here in the West, is filled with euphemisms, clichés and idioms that date back centuries. How many times a day, do you suppose, do we quote Shakespeare without realizing it?

What I want to know is, who decided which books made the list back in the 1960s? A lot of teenagers were busy hiding dog-eared copies of "Peyton Place" from parents and teachers. (I never had my own copy.)

After I had the column finished,

I scrapped it.

Plan B: Find another topic for my column. I guess you can tell I haven't figured out Plan B. I sort of realized my eclectic tastes in reading material have given me a broad sampling of writing styles, phrasing, vocabulary, syntax and all those other elements of literature my teachers tried to instill.

I have read some of those books, probably most notably, is "Jane Eyre." I've read and reread it as least a dozen times, and I rarely miss any new movies based on the novel. I highly recommend it.

The advent of the internet has changed what and how people read. I still prefer having a book in hand, turning the pages one by one., curled up in bed, reading by lamp-light. I have a Kindle. It's sitting on my nightstand, not charged.

Give me a good book, any day.

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- Half / Page $8.250 \times 5.175 = \$30$
- Half / Page $4.063 \times 10.637 = \$30$
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- 1/8 / Page $1.875 \times 10.563 = \$10$
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Discounts are available for multiple runs of the same ad.

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- Design and content of ads are the responsibility of the advertiser. The AGENDA editorial staff has the final say on whether ad content is appropriate.
- Payment must be made at time of submission.
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- Payment can be made by credit card over the phone (571) 295-5900.

